

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for conducting a plurality of transactions related to dispensing dispense postage, the apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing accounting data concerning postage dispensation, the accounting data varying with the transactions; and

a plurality of identical processors, each processor being associated with a different subset of the transactions, wherein each processor is periodically engaged in a multiplexed manner to take turns verifying the accounting data for each transaction at least the transactions in the subset associated with the processor.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the accounting data includes an amount of a fund available for the postage dispensation.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the accounting data includes a cumulative amount of the postage dispensation.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the accounting data includes indices for identifying the transactions.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the memory includes a non-volatile memory.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein each processor also stores records concerning the transactions in the subset associated with the processor.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for conducting a sequence of transactions related to ~~for~~ generating postage indicia, each postage indicium containing a plurality of data elements, the apparatus comprising:

an interface for receiving a postage value for each transaction of the sequence;

a first processor for generating an ensemble of information for each transaction containing data derived from at least the postage value for each transaction;

a plurality of identical second processors; and

a mechanism for providing each ensemble to a selected one of the second processors, the selected second processor generating at least one of the data elements of a postage indicium from the ensemble, wherein each of the second processors is periodically engaged in a multiplexed manner to take turns generating the data elements corresponding to each ensemble.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the data is also derived from postage values in selected transactions prior to the transaction.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the number of selected transactions is a function of the number of second processors.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the ensemble of information also contains an index identifying the transaction.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the ensemble of information also contains second data concerning an increased amount of a fund available for postage dispensation.

21. (Original) The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the at least one of the data elements includes a code for authenticating the postage indicium.
22. (Original) The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the code includes a digital signature.
23. (Original) The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the ensemble of information also contains a subset of the data elements, the digital signature being derived from the subset of the data elements.
24. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a plurality of transactions related to dispensing dispense postage, the method for use in an apparatus including a plurality of identical processors, each processor being associated with a different subset of the transactions, the method comprising:
- storing accounting data concerning postage dispensation, the accounting data varying with the transactions; and
- verifying by each processor the accounting data for at least the transactions in the subset associated with the processor, wherein each processor is periodically engaged in a multiplexed manner to take turns verifying the accounting data for each transaction in the subset associated with the processor.
25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the accounting data includes an amount of a fund available for the postage dispensation.
26. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the accounting data includes a cumulative amount of the postage dispensation.
27. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the accounting data includes indices for identifying the transactions.
28. (Original) The method of claim 24 further comprising storing by each processor records concerning the transactions in the subset associated with the processor.
29. (Cancelled)

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Cancelled)

33. (Cancelled)

34. (Cancelled)

35. (Cancelled)

36. (Cancelled)

37. (Cancelled)

38. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting a sequence of transactions related to ~~for~~ generating postage indicia, each postage indicium containing a plurality of data elements, the method for use in an apparatus including a first processor and a plurality of identical second processors, the method comprising:

receiving a postage value for each transaction of the sequence;

generating by the first processor an ensemble of information for each transaction containing data derived from at least the postage value for each transaction; and

providing each ensemble to a selected one of the second processors, the selected second processor generating at least one of the data elements of a postage indicium from the ensemble, wherein each of the second processors is periodically engaged in a multiplexed manner to take turns generating the data elements corresponding to each ensemble.

39. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the data is also derived from postage values in selected transactions prior to the transaction.

40. (Original) The method of claim 39 wherein the number of selected transactions is a function of the number of second processors.

41. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the ensemble of information also contains an index identifying the transaction.

42. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the ensemble of information also contains second data concerning an increased amount of a fund available for postage dispensation.

43. (Original) The method of claim 38 wherein the at least one of the data elements includes a code for authenticating the postage indicium.

44. (Original) The method of claim 43 wherein the code includes a digital signature.

45. (Original) The method of claim 44 wherein the ensemble of information also contains a subset of the data elements, the digital signature being derived from the subset of the data elements.